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MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 360-8-4

October 31, 2007

SUBJECT: PER – Travel Charge Card Misuse

Purpose: To inform and remind employees of NRCS guidance for addressing the misuse of travel charge cards.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2008.

Background: The travel charge cards are mandatory for use in connection with official travel by employees who meet NRCS requirements for issuance of the card. The USDA Government Travel Card Regulations, Department Regulation 2300-001, explains the Department's Zero-Tolerance Policy regarding travel card misuse.

Each cardholder received the terms and conditions for use of the card when it was issued and periodic reminders of their responsibilities. Even though steps or actions are taken to eliminate misuse of the travel charge card, it still occurs. Some examples of misuse are:

- Using the card for excessive cash advances or for cash advances not related and/or connected to official travel. Cash advances are limited to the meals and incidental expenses rate (M&IE) for the temporary duty location (not to exceed \$50 per day).
- Allowing someone else to use the card (family members, friends, co-workers, etc.).
- Using the card for non-official travel related expenses.
- Failure to make prompt and full payment of the travel card bill.
- Using the card in the vicinity of the official duty station or residence, unless used in connection with official travel.

The Department Regulation 2300-001 defines official travel as written authorization to travel on business for the Federal Government that will result in reimbursement for expenses on a travel voucher Form AD-616. This does not include travel performed within 12 hours for which no per diem cost are incurred (e.g., mileage reimbursement on SF-1164).

Misuse of the travel charge card has serious consequences. Effective August 17, 2007, NHQ issued more specific information/guidance about the disciplinary penalties warranted by various types of travel charge card misuse.

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There are two types of travel card violations and penalties. One is delinquency, the second is for misuse. Refer to the National NRCS Penalty Guide below for the appropriate personnel action applicable for each type and severity of penalty.

Penalty Guide

NATURE OF MISCONDUCT	FIRST OFFENSE	SECOND OFFENSE	THIRD OFFENSE
Delinquency Payment is 30 days or more past due: Infrequent traveler (≤ 5 trips/year) Frequent traveler (> 5 trips/year)	Letter of Warning Letter of Warning to Reprimand	Reprimand to 7-day suspension Reprimand to 14-day suspension	14- to 30-day suspension 30-day suspension to removal
Misuse Personal purchases, or cash advances, not related to official travel: One transaction/cash advance ≤ \$300 One transaction/cash advance > \$300 More than one transaction/cash advance Note: A transaction is a single use of the card regardless of number of items purchased at one time.	Reprimand to 14-day suspension 15- to 30-day suspension 60-day suspension to Removal	30-day suspension to Removal 60-day suspension to Removal Removal	Removal Removal
Excessive purchases, or excessive cash advances (as defined by D.R. 2300-001) associated with official travel: Advance(s) associated with one trip Advances associated with more than one trip	Reprimand to 30-day suspension 60-day suspension to Removal	60-day suspension to Removal	Removal
Allowing/enabling another to use the cardholder's card	Removal		

Each cardholder should review the Departmental Regulation 2300-001 (available at: www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR2300-001.pdf) and discuss any questions with your ASTC (FO)/ section head or with Bryan Welp, Budget Officer.

If you have questions regarding disciplinary actions, contact Gloria Larson, Human Resources Officer at 651-602-7902.

/S/

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

DIST: AE